



NCOA[®]

Non Commissioned Officers Association of the United States of America

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**STATEMENT
OF
GENE OVERSTREET
12TH SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE UNITED STATES
MARINE CORPS (Retired)
PRESIDENT & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
BEFORE THE
JOINT SESSION OF THE
COMMITTEES ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AND
UNITED STATES SENATE
ON THE
NON COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
VETERAN LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR 2005**

MARCH 10, 2005

**NON COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

NCOA LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VA Fiscal Appropriations

- VA Budget inadequate for FY 2005 requirements
- VA programs should be determined based on requirements and needs as opposed to being shaped by inadequate fiscal resources.
- FY 2006 VA Budget Authority
 - Oppose Increased Co Pays and enrollment fees

Veterans Health Administration

- Establish requirement for Mandatory Funding for Health Care
- Oppose Reduction in per diem support for State Nursing Home Care
- Oppose suspension of Cost Shared Development of State Nursing Homes
- Implement the Electronic Medical Record for military personnel for use by DoD and VA throughout and following the member's military service.
- Require external review to establish effectiveness of the current Pre- and Post-Assessment self-administered deployment health assessment to determine compliance with DoD policies
- Require electronic communication be mandated to institutionalize required demographic data from DoD health care to VA including name, social security number, gender, home of record and diagnosis.

Transformation of VHA Remains Incomplete

- Mental health integration could have dramatic budget impact and better serve veterans

Veteran Benefits Administration

- Open Enrollment Period for VEAP-era Non Participants
- Indexing the Montgomery GI Bill
- Removal of MGIB Delimiting Date for use of member enrollment fee
- National Guard and Reserve Montgomery GI Bill Enhancements
- Retention of DIC benefits after age 55
- Clarification of DIC Benefit and Concurrent Receipt Policy
- Revise DIC Payment Policy
- Need People as well as technology to process claims

National Cemetery Administration

- Maintain Glide Path to bring aboard new National Cemeteries
- Increase State Plot Allowance

Request Committee be Advocates for Military/Veterans beyond Committees Responsibilities

- Combat Related Special Compensation - Inclusion of IU
- Asbestos Trust Fund - Support Establishment
- Medical Care – Military retirees never have to choose a health care system
- Codify Burial Rules at Arlington
- 100 Percent Disabled Veteran Space A Travel
- Protect the American Flag
- IRS Charity Rules

The Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA (NCOA) is thankful to Chairman Steve Buyer, House Committee on Veterans Affairs, and Chairman Larry Craig, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, and the distinguished members of both committees for providing this opportunity to present the Association's veterans legislative perspective and goals for 2005. We also formally take this opportunity to welcome and recognize the two distinguished Chairmen who have been appointed to the leadership positions of their respective committees.

I am Gene Overstreet, 12th Sergeant Major of the United States Marine Corps (Retired), President and Chief Executive Officer of the Non Commissioned Officers Association. I am joined today by CMSgt Richard C. Schneider, USAF (Retired), NCOA Executive Director of Government Affairs; and Matthew H. Dailey, MSG, USA (Retired), Military Affairs Associate of the Association's National Capital Office.

Introduction:

NCOA is privileged to represent active duty enlisted service members of all military services, the United States Coast Guard, associated Guard and Reserve Forces as well as veterans of all components. The association provides for these members through every stage of their military career from enlistment to eventual separation, retirement and on to their final military honors rendered on behalf of a grateful Nation. The Association defines well its membership service as "cradle, or enlistment, to grave" and then continues to provide services to the veterans surviving family members.

NCOA representation of enlisted members from all services and components makes it unique and enables it to provide a full and comprehensive perspective on active duty, veteran and survivor issues for the Administration and this Congress.

NCOA is guided in its legislative role by resolutions adopted annually by its worldwide membership. We take those resolutions very seriously recognizing vital responsibilities to be in the forefront of issues impacting the large numbers of active duty, Guard and Reserve members currently in harm's way deployed around the world in America's War against Terrorism. In military parlance, this noncommissioned officer leadership team is on point here on Capitol Hill to articulate entitlement issues protecting benefits as necessary, extending value to those benefits that have failed to keep pace in a 21st Century America, and lastly, to achieve new entitlements to meet the needs of today's warriors and their family members. We believe the promises of a grateful Nation must be honored and held sacred for those who risk their very lives fulfilling their commitment to America.

The words of the Oath of Military Enlistment are simple but provide the very essence of service for every military man and woman by their ultimate declaration:

"...to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America."

Please note that in the Enlistment oath there is no qualifying comment such as *funds and resources permitting*. . .

Right now if I were to turn in my chair I would see what you are looking at.

**Generations of Americans who without hesitation risked everything in the military service
of their Nation.**

Like those before them, their commitment gave and preserved the freedoms we enjoy.

**Like you, I am so proud of each man and woman
who has worn the uniforms of this nation.**

Beyond military members deployed or stationed on the home front, this association is ever mindful of their spouses and family members. These marvelous military families live with not only the heartbreak and frustration of separation but the reality that separation can be compounded by daily televised and news reporting of personnel either killed or wounded. Truly, the media brings in real time the horrors being experienced by military members to the living rooms of their spouses and children. Soldiers in living color weeping over a dead or wounded comrade are joined thousands of miles away by the emotion and tears of family and friends who share the loss.

NCOA approaches this Joint Session of the Committees on Veterans Affairs, 109th Congress with large numbers of association active duty, Guard, and Reserve members deployed.

The Association makes note that NCOA is a member of The Military Coalition, a forum of nationally prominent uniformed services and veterans' organizations that shares collective views on veteran and active duty issues. The Association is also a veteran organization supporter of the 2006 Independent Budget.

VA Fiscal Appropriations

NCOA reflects the past eleven fiscal years have been characterized by five years where fiscal growth was nearly steady state yielding an increase of less than 3 percent. These early years were followed by six years including the past fiscal year of notable budget growth which while significant paled in comparison to the events of a nearly completed decade in which the number of veteran users and medical cost increases outpaced budget gains. Most in this room will vividly remember this past year the former Secretary of Veterans Affairs acknowledge the belief that the Administration's budget proposal represented a \$1 Billion plus budget shortfall.

FY 2005 Appropriation

NCOA recognizes that the availability of an adequate annual appropriated budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs directly impacts VA programs and the legislative priorities approved by Congress. It was evident to veteran service organizations that the Department's current FY 2005 Budget would be inadequate without additional appropriations. The battle and advocacy for increased authorizations that could have ensured adequate funding in the current fiscal year eventually were denied. NCOA fully envisions programs throughout VA to be negatively impacted in the current fiscal year and dampened in scope to provide programs shaped by the fiscal authorization. This Association would advocate that needs drive requirements and that veteran health care, benefits, or cemeteries should begin to add to the back-log of services as the year progresses.

FY 2006 Appropriation

The Association submitted Statements for the Record on the proposed FY 2006 VA Budget. Simply stated we expressed the concern that VA will be severely challenged as the current fiscal year ends and FY 2006 commences. NCOA believes that the '06 Budget has features designed to create a hemorrhage of veterans out of Veterans Health Care or serve as a bar to preclude enrollment. These features include an increase in pharmacy co-payments from \$7.00 to \$15.00 per month, and an enrollment

NCOA Opposes Increased Co-Pays and Enrollment Fees:

- Proposed increase in the existing pharmacy veteran co-payments of \$7.00 to \$15.00 per month.

NCOA recognizes that many aging veterans on fixed incomes could easily end up with a pharmacy co-payment costing an additional \$100.00 or more per month. Even an increase of just \$20.00 per month could dramatically negatively impact senior veterans.

- And again a proposed enrollment or user fee of \$250.00 for Priority Groups 7 and 8.

This Association will continue as in the past to articulate that no “user taxes” in the form of any enrollment fee be required of any veteran. These user fees in the judgment of NCOA are designed to stampede Category 7 and 8 veterans out of VA Health Care facilities thereby reducing costs and budget implications.

Regrettably, many of these veterans simply cannot afford a \$250.00 user fee and loss of access to VA health care would threaten their very lives.

Full Funding for VA Health Care

It is time that MANDATORY funding be provided for veterans health care. The issue of whether or not health care funding should be discretionary or mandatory is, in the Association's judgment, secondary to securing future adequate budget authority to provide health care service to America's veterans.

Recommendations:

- That Appropriated Budgets require mandatory, vice discretionary, funding for veterans health care programs.
- That VHA work to secure and implement the past year's envisioned VA+Choice Medicare health services for Priority 8 veterans not otherwise eligible for VA enrolled health care.

- That VA implement its long-standing initiative to become a TRICARE provider eligible for reimbursement for services provided.

Veterans Health Administration:

- **Medical inflation costs continue to outpace budget increases.**
- **Failure of VHA to implement Millennium Long term Care (LTC) Requirements within VA**
- **Proposed Reduction in FY06 Budget for LTC daily per diem support of State Veteran Nursing Homes who VA viewed as their collaborative partner to reduce nursing care beds at VA facilities. The reduction in per diem may also cause a financial hemorrhage of veterans exiting state facilities as no longer affordable. The problems associated with their exodus for families and state veteran facilities will spike off the chart.**
- **NCOA recognizes that VA has established a moratorium and will not Cost Share the development of State Veteran Homes in FY 2006. The delay in construction of state veteran homes will impact both LTC and housing needs for resident veterans.**

The Transformation of VHA Remains Incomplete:

NCOA continues its recognition that the transformation of VHA remains incomplete as long as Mental Health is not fully integrated into its total health delivery system.

NCOA strongly believes the future of VA Health Care demands the dynamic expansion of Mental Health Programs into all primary medical care clinics. Recent studies reveal mental health intervention starting in the health care clinic can significantly reduce costs associated with both medical intervention and use of prescription medications. The completed Transformation will ultimately contribute to the direct productivity and cost effectiveness of VA. This is the potential margin in which the future VA can significantly capitalize on its existing fiscal resources while reducing health care costs.

NCOA recognizes that VA Health Administration has begun to study this 21st Century approach to medicine more actively involving mental health practitioners as an active component of the healing team. The system must move further toward complete integration and build out its mental health team to be the necessary and effective partner on the medical therapeutic team.

Already on the horizon are countless Armed Forces Personnel returning from America's War on Terrorism with significant indicators that will require a viable, accessible mental health program, and substantive mental health program. Among the indicators:

- **The deaths of over 1,500 service members, including 33 women, from close knit military units.**

- Significant numbers of wounded personnel from terrorist attacks and countless others who were with them on the battlefields, triage centers, and hospitals.
- Severity of wounds, resultant life style changes, and family stresses will create needs beyond current capability.
- Requirement to support personnel whose military wartime experiences will require PTSD intervention.
- **And strongest among the indicators:**

The high suicide and attempted suicide rates among active duty service personnel while not a new issue is certainly one of specific concern for the military services. Just in the past week, the USMC related in a Congressional hearing the suicide deaths of 24 Marines in CY 2003. Those deaths are tragically significant in and of themselves but are overshadowed by the attempted suicide of another 83 Marines in the same period. It was also noted that approximately 24 percent of those suicides were by Marines who had been deployed in support of America's War on Terrorism.

It is apparent that the VA Mental Health Program currently lacks adequate staffing to support an integrated VA clinic concept, substance abuse (drug and alcohol) programs, homeless veterans, rehabilitation programs, and geriatric programs.

NCOA on site visits has recognized that mental health professionals have their workload distributed by specific hours to different locations in metropolitan community veteran programs. Reductions in mental health bed spaces throughout VA are a deterrent to quality health care.

A number of years ago VHA reasoned that mental health outcomes were relatively the same in either inpatient or outpatient settings. The reduction in mental health beds was also a budget driven process as VA moved to the VISN concept.

Combat veterans, homeless veterans and those dual diagnosed need structured control in their environment as opposed to participating in a weekday group session while later in the same day they are living under bridges or associating with people with severe substance abuse problems.

The Association recognizes that the investment in mental health transformation will take years and considerable appropriated budget costs but the time and expense will result in cost savings and better total health care of veterans.

Veterans Benefits Administration

Educational Benefits

- **Open Enrollment for VEAP-era Non Participants**

A significant number of servicemembers who entered the military during the Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) era initially declined VEAP enrollment and remain on active duty and have no post-service educational assistance. The Defense Manpower Data

Center reports that as of September 2004 that are 61,980 active duty service members in the force who declined VEAP upon entering military service. They have not been given the same opportunity to enroll in the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) as other VEAP-era entrants who actually enrolled in VEAP.

NCOA recognizes that many VEAP-era (1977-30 June 1985) “decliners” were encouraged by Service counselors not to sign up for VEAP because the benefit was inferior. Late VEAP-era enlistees were even promised future enrollment in the MGIB. The erroneous counseling that encouraged declination in VEAP in favor of an enhanced educational program caused many to be today without educational benefit.

The Association recognizes that there have been two opportunities for VEAP *enrollees* to convert to the MGIB; however, there has never been an opportunity for those who did not enroll in VEAP to do so. The first VEAP conversion program was offered only to those enrolled in VEAP with active accounts of at least \$1.00. This conversion was conducted from October 1996 through October 1997 and yielded approximately 30,000 enrollees. A second VEAP conversion was authorized for those enrolled in VEAP with zero-balance accounts from October 2000 to November 2001. 2,698 (2%) of the 108,792 eligible actually enrolled in the MGIB. With such historically modest conversion numbers, it is highly unlikely that an open-enrollment opportunity for this group of career servicemembers would require more than a modest projected increase in the MGIB fund. With the nation at war, these future veterans should be given the same opportunity to enroll (or decline) the MGIB as all other servicemembers.

Recommendation: That a one-time MGIB open-enrollment opportunity be authorized for all service members but especially for VEAP-era *non-participants* this year.

- **Indexing the Montgomery GI Bill**

As one of the founding members of the Partnership for Veterans Education, NCOA has had a long-standing goal of benchmarking the MGIB benefits so that they keep pace with the average cost of a four-year public college education. NCOA recognizes that the existing rates do not permit a separating married service member to enter college without gainful full or part time employment creating a dramatic impact on both their educational endeavor and marital relationship. If children are part of the veterans’ family, they become an obstacle to the veterans’ educational pursuit. The challenges of readjustment facing those separating who have been deployed multiple times in their military career should not be further challenged by an inadequate educational benefit.

Recommendation: That MGIB rates be raised to a heightened threshold benchmark of 53 percent to allow greater utilization of MGIB entitlement. Establish annual bench mark provisions into law so that the benefit parallels the spiraling increase in education costs and create a review of the existing threshold bench mark (currently 47 percent but recommended here to be raised to 53 percent) to ensure a realistic educational opportunity. A sufficient educational entitlement will impact America. Veterans or today like those of World War II will complete their college curriculums and will be the future leaders of industry returning not only tax dollars to the Treasury but ensuring employment opportunities for countless others who will follow in their foot steps.

- **Removal of MGIB Delimiting Date**

Many active duty members separate or retire from the military and because of financial circumstances and need for employment to support their families never use their Montgomery GI Bill entitlement. Their education entitlement expires 10 years following separation from the military. Members contribute \$1,200 to be eligible for the MGIB. Many of these veterans are only able to pursue educational programs or special classes later in life when their own children are grown and independent of parental financial support.

Recommendations:

That all military retirees have a delimiting date equal to the number of years served in the military and then have access to the unused portion on their \$1,200.00 enrollment fee.

That veterans have access to the unused portion of their \$1,200.00 enrollment fee after the 10-year delimiting period to pursue educational endeavors.

- **National Guard and Reserve Montgomery GI Bill**

Recommendation #1: That your Committees works with respective Armed Services Committees to transfer the Chapter 1606, Title 10 reserve MGIB program to Title 38.

Recommendation #2: Establish the benchmark value of Guard and Reserve entitlements equal to that of the active force.

Recommendation #3: That the delimiting date provisions mirror those of the active force.

- **Retention of DIC Benefits after Remarriage**

The 108th Congress authorized Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) widows who remarry after age 57 to retain their DIC benefits. This was a major change in policy, which previously did not permit reinstatement of any DIC benefit if the DIC widow remarried. It also established an arbitrary age of 57 where other similar Federal programs allow remarriage at age 55. NCOA urges the Committees to change reinstatement of this benefit for a widow(er) who remarries at age 55.

Recommendation: That Congress provides funds to permit a DIC widow(er) to remarry after the age of 55 (vice 57) and to retain DIC status and benefits.

- **Clarification of DIC Benefit and Concurrent Receipt Policy**

During the debate on Concurrent Receipt in the First Session of the 108th Congress, NCOA was of the perception that DIC recipients who were military Survivor Benefit Program (SBP) beneficiaries would be eligible to retain their SBP entitlement without “offset.” This action was never codified in law as a provision for concurrent receipt. NCOA believes that DIC and SBP entitlements are separate and distinct. SBP represents an election by the service member with

concurrence by the member's spouse at time of retirement for which a monthly premium is paid to provide a spousal annuity. The DIC benefit is authorized based on the veteran's death from a service-connected disability. Clearly, these two programs SBP administered by the Department of Defense and DIC administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs are separate and distinct entitlements and each should be available without offset. The current offset is widely regarded as a "tax" reducing the military member's elected SBP entitlement. NCOA urges the Committees to allow concurrent receipt of these distinctly different entitlements.

Recommendation: That DIC and SBP entitlements are provided the surviving spouse without offset.

- **Revise DIC Payment Policy**

DIC benefits are paid monthly for the preceding month. If the DIC recipient dies at any time in the preceding month, that month's DIC payment is recouped by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Example: VA recoups the entire payment made for the month in which the recipient died regardless of when the recipient died (the 1st day, 15 day or last day of the month). VA, if notified of the death promptly, will make a reverse electronic debit from the account of the electronic deposit. This action has many times resulted in financial hardship caused by former recipient's family members using all resources available to make funeral and estate arrangements without awareness of the debit that occurred. Similarly, written checks received and deposited to the deceased member's account will inevitably result in an overpayment collection notice. Most DIC recipients and their family members have spent a life-time augmenting VA health care and the physical day-to-day life style needs of their disabled veteran. Creating a negative financial impact on the children and/or estate of a widow(er) of a former disabled veteran is in NCOA judgment wrong.

Recommendation: Allow the family (estate) of a widow(er) to retain the entire month's DIC payment in which the recipient's death occurred.

- **Veteran Claim Processing**

NCOA recognizes that current budget programs will reduce the number of full time employees processing claims within the Veterans Benefits Administration.

Significant effort has been made to secure and implement improved information technology systems to expedite the management of the claim process, increase productivity through technology, and reduce errors through intelligent systems. Secondly, and as equally important to technology enhancements, has been attracting new employees to VBA and providing the opportunity for their professional growth in the adjudication and administration of an effective and efficient veteran claim process. NCOA strongly believes that motivated people armed with enhanced information systems best serves America's Veterans.

Recommendations:

Continued Recruitment and Training to replace an aging and retirement eligible workforce eligible to separate from VBA in the next five years.

Development of automated self-service computerized access to benefit and entitlement processes accessible 7 x 24 and through centralized email capacity to answer a significant volume of questions that would otherwise require the personal intervention of VBA benefits counselors.

Man additional outreach locations with VBA service officers to support veterans at CBOCs, VA and community homeless shelters, and veteran training programs.

National Cemetery Administration

NCOA is truly delighted that in the past fiscal years that the Nation recognized the shortages in grave sites and inurnment facilities across America for veterans and their eligible beneficiaries. The Association recognizes the budget “spin” to put a happy face on the Cemetery System but seriously doubts that the approved envisioned National and State Cemeteries can be developed as proposed in law.

NCOA believes that the envisioned FY 2006 budget will cause project delays and tradeoffs that will allow a ripple of marginal improvement that in time will require the infusion of significant fiscal resources to “go back and finish the original cemetery program.”

State Veteran Cemeteries augment the National Cemetery Administration mission to provide a final resting place for America’s service personnel and their eligible family members.

CONCLUSION

The Non Commissioned Officers Association has appreciated this opportunity to provide this Joint Committee with the Association’s 2005 Veteran Legislative Goals.

Your work is extremely important to improving the lives of the men and women who have served their country in the armed services. The efforts you make to improve the veteran system will send the message to today’s veterans, as well as tomorrow’s, that dutifully answering the call to protect all American citizens by serving in the armed services is appreciated and valued. Our nation must reward freedom’s protectors with significant, substantive benefits.

Recently there have been interesting comments that mischaracterize this Nation’s veterans and military retirees: a senior Pentagon official questioning whether veterans and retirees were being supported at the expense of taking care of today’s military force. And, just a week ago a Member of the United States Congress made a similar type of assertion at a House Subcommittee Meeting on Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations. Yours voices remain critical for those who have sacrificed for America. NCOA has stated over the years that the cost of war doesn’t end when the fighting is over. Every war, battle and terrorist attack has a financial cost that can last for more than an additional 75 years after the last bullet was fired.

Chairman Buyer, Chairman Craig, the Non Commissioned Officers Association requests that you maintain a comprehensive vision for veterans that extends to programs that do not fall under your committee's jurisdiction but clearly impacts veterans and their survivors. As advocates for veterans' issues, NCOA asks that you take an aggressive leadership role on such issues as:

- **Concurrent Receipt**

Authorize concurrent receipt of all military retired pay and VA disability compensation without offset from either for all disabled military retirees.

Full concurrent receipt for those veterans retired because of physical disabilities prior to the completion of 20 years of military service and those offered early retirement at 15 years of service as a force reduction program.

- **Combat Related Special Compensation**

Include Individual Unemployability in rating decisions for CRSC.

- **Asbestos Trust Fund**

Support establishment of the Asbestos Trust Fund to provide immediate settlement for countless Americans including significant numbers of military and DoD personnel exposed to asbestos and whose lives today are terminal from medical conditions such as mesothelioma, pneumoconiosis, pulmonary fibrosis, lung disease, bronchogenic carcinoma, malignant mesothelioma. Naval personnel historically have been associated with asbestos exposure resulting from use in the construction of naval vessels for fire protection but in recent years the Nation's military has been exposed not only on ships, but buildings including the Pentagon and barracks in Iraq.

- **Medical Care**

Making certain that military retirees eligible for VA health care never have to choose between health systems of DoD, VA, and Medicare.

- **Codifying Burial Rules for Arlington National Cemetery**

NCOA strongly believes that the existing rules for internment at Arlington National Cemetery should be changed to allow burial of retirement eligible reservists, without regard to an age limitation, reservists on active or inactive duty for training, and their eligible dependents family members should all be entitled to burial at ANC. It is reprehensible to bar any reservist the right to be buried based on an arbitrary age requirement or deny when the death results during an authorized active or inactive training period. Members of the Reserve Components need to be fully recognized as a vital element of the Armed Forces and their training periods prepares them for war

and other hostilities where they are placed in harm's way. Recommend the following provisions be so codified:

- The burial entitlement of a retirement eligible member of a Reserve Component who at the time of death was under 60 years of age and who, but for age would have been eligible at the time of death for retired pay under 1223 of Title 10 may be buried at ANC on the same basis as the remains of members of the Armed Forces entitled to retired pay under that chapter. The remains of the dependents of a member whose remains are eligible for burial at ANC on the same basis as dependents of members of the Armed Forces entitled to retired pay under such chapter 1223.
- The remains of member of a Reserve component or National Guard of the Armed Forces who dies in the line of duty while on active duty for training or inactive duty training may be buried at ANC on the same basis as the remains of a member of the Armed Forces who dies while on active duty. Provide for the remains of the dependents of a member on the same basis as dependents of members of active duty.
- **100 Percent Disabled Veteran Space Available Travel**

Seek and support legislation that will establish a Space Available (Space A) category for 100 percent service connected disabled veterans on military aircraft or government transportation afforded military retirees
- **Protect the American Flag**

Endorse Constitutional Amendment to protect the American Flag. Let the People, *"We The People,"* decide the final issue to authorize an amendment for this purpose.
- **IRS Charity Rules**

Charities that accept motor vehicles are preparing for a decline in vehicle donations due to a change federal tax regulations. Effective Jan. 1, 2005, taxpayers no longer are able to deduct the market value of a vehicle that they donate to charity. Their deduction instead will be the amount that the charity receives from selling or auctioning the vehicle. The amounts received are at dealer auctions are typically less than the vehicle's market value.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Association's legislative initiatives on behalf of the membership of the Non Commissioned Officers Association of the United States of America.

DISCLOSURE OF FEDERAL GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

The Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA (NCOA) does not currently receive, nor has the Association ever received, any federal money for grants or contracts. All of the Association's activities and services are accomplished completely free of any federal funding.

**Non Commissioned Officers Association
of
the United States of America
Gene Overstreet
President/CEO**

Sergeant Major Gene Overstreet, the 12th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, accepted the position of President of the Non Commissioned Officers Association on August 22, 2003 at the NCOA Business Meeting. Overstreet first joined NCOA as Vice President, Membership Recruiting on May 1, 2001.

Sergeant Major Overstreet was born December 4, 1944 in Houston, TX. He entered the Marine Corps in June 1966 and completed recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, CA, followed by Basic Infantry Training School at Camp Pendleton, CA.

Upon completion of school, he reported to Staging Battalion at Camp Pendleton, for further assignment to the 1st Military Police Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, and Republic of Vietnam. Returning to the states, he was reassigned to the Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Pendleton.

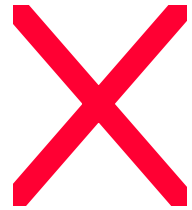
Sergeant Major Overstreet subsequently completed successful tours on the Inspector-Instructor staff, Wichita, Kansas; recruiting duty in Des Moines, IA, and Detroit, MI; then returning to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, as a junior drill instructor, senior drill instructor, Series Gunnery Sergeant and Chief Instructor. Reassigned to Drill Instructor School, he was an Instructor, Drill Master and Chief Instructor.

After completing First Sergeant School, he was assigned to Special Projects at Drill Instructor School, where he undertook the enormous task of completely transferring the Drill Manual onto videotape for more optimal use during instructional periods. His promotion to first sergeant in February 1979 led to his third assignment on Okinawa as the First Sergeant, Headquarters and Service Co. 9th Engineer Battalion.

Upon his return from overseas, he was the First Sergeant of both Company B and C, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, CA.

Promoted to his present rank in October 1983, Sergeant Major Overstreet became the Inspector Sergeant Major, MCAGCC, Twentynine Palms. Returning to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, he served as a Battalion and Regimental Sergeant Major in the Recruit Training Regiment. Transferring to Camp Lejeune, NC, he served as the 6th Marines Sergeant Major. This assignment was followed by duty as Regimental Sergeant Major, 12th Marines, Okinawa.

On April 6, 1990, Sergeant Major Overstreet was posted as Depot Sergeant Major at San Diego. He was selected as the 12th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps in April 1991, and assumed the post on June 28, 1991.



Sergeant Major Overstreet's personal decorations include: Distinguished Service Medal; Superior Service Medal; the Meritorious Service Medal; Navy Commendation Medal; Navy Achievement Medal; and the Combat Action Ribbon.

Upon retiring from the Marine Corps, (June 29, 1995), he worked for a commercial insurance company where he held positions as Vice President of Military Marketing, Regional Vice President for Production, and Vice President for Field Development.

He is married to the former Jeanne Miller of Plainview, TX. They have one son, Jarod.